

The grace, mercy, and peace of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour be your this day. Amen. The title for today’s sermon is “What is your greatest treasure?” and is based on the Gospel reading: Luke Chapter 12. Let us pray . . . Amen.

Today’s Gospel reading is a continuation from last week’s Gospel reading from Luke chapter 12. Jesus was teaching the crowds around Him after leaving a meal with the Pharisees and lawyers. Now Jesus’ directs His attention and teaching to His disciples and He explains the parable of the rich fool, the one who was fatally confused about what was most important in life.

What is your greatest treasure?

Each and every one of us has some kind of treasure, sometimes even a few different ones: Money, Candy, Food, Clothing, Shoes, Vehicle, Toy, Coffee, Alcohol, Electronic Gadget, That Certain Heirloom Sitting Behind Glass or Nicely Tucked Away, House, Land, Farm. But treasures are not limited to your possessions; treasures can also be Friends, Your Career, Power, Name, Influence, accomplishments, Your Feelings, Your Independence, or Some of the Most Coveted; Your Health, Your Reputation, Your Time, Your Family—Spouse, Kids, Grandkids—,and Your Life.

So, what is your greatest treasure?

What do you put the most trust in to provide for you, to fulfill you, to protect you, and what treasure does the thought of losing cause you great angst or anxiousness. Your greatest treasure is usually very obvious, if not to you to then to those around you because it is the one thing you will sacrifice everything else to get or to keep.

Really, what is your greatest treasure?

What do you most think about? What keeps you up at night?

What do you most yearn to achieve? What do you most desire to get or keep?

What is the most important thing in your life which you need above everything else?

What treasure are you not willing to sacrifice or give up no matter what? That is your greatest treasure.

What is your greatest treasure?

Ponder this for a moment. Can this treasure be taken from you? Does the thought of losing it terrify you? Does your treasure complete you, or does it cause you more anxiety than comfort? Can a thief steal it, a moth or child destroy it, or a bank repossess it? Can your treasure save you from anything earthly? How about eternally? Where does your treasure really come from? Who ultimately gave it to you? Is it not everything good from God? Too often we get lost in the worries of this world.

Jesus is teaching this to His disciples in today’s Gospel reading. It is part of the longer dialogue in Luke chapter 12 discussing the First Commandment and its practical applications. Jesus is explaining to His disciples about where their, **and our**, fear, love, and trust should be. But Jesus not just talking about earthly treasures, rather Jesus connects the proper attitude toward possessions with the kingdom of God. Jesus is not just talking about the here and now; rather Jesus is talking about the here to eternity.

In the Gospel text, Jesus is not just talking to His disciples, He is catechising them. He is preparing them for what is to come and for their future proclamation after His ascension. Here in these 13 verses, Jesus uses 10 imperative verbs; verbs which give orders, commands, and instructions. Jesus used these kinds of verbs to instruct His disciples, such as in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49: 20 imperatives) and when He taught them how to pray the Lord’s Prayer and how the gifts of the Father are connected to the kingdom (Luke 11:2-4).

“The ten imperatives here ... are urgent for those who are journeying with Jesus to Jerusalem since they soon will be heralds of the Kingdom that comes through Jesus’ death and resurrection. They must be prepared to proclaim that kingdom in Acts. Of these ten imperatives, eight have to do with material possessions (...), and the remaining two are solely about the kingdom (12:31-32) *of God*”(Just, Luke 9:51-24:53, p.510)

For us and the disciples possessions—our coveted earthly treasures—can become a huge distraction. Our attitude and anxiousness towards our earthly treasures, those earthly demi-gods, can and do distract us from our focus on the kingdom of heaven, and the only God who can eternally save us.

Jesus tells His disciples, and by extension us, that “Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.”(12:23) “Jesus instructs the disciples to study and ponder how God cares for the ravens and the lilies. He notes, “Of how much more value are you than the birds?””(Just, 510). Life is so much more than just what we eat and drink, and yet it is all in God's hands. “Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to *your* span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?”(12:25-26)

And yet we do and we are anxious. We stress over all kinds of our treasures. Anxiety over these runs rampant in our society. Too often we get lost in the worries of this world along with the rest of the world. We get concerned about what we will wear and what others think about us, our bank accounts, fluctuation in either, or both, the stock market and the weather cause us anxiety, world terror plots, global warming or climate change, new uncertainty in the potash industry, interest rate fluctuations, strokes, heart disease, cancer, how much longer we will be able to live on our own and the possibility of having to move into a nursing home to be taken care of, or that final one—you ... just ... might ... die.

Well the last one is a forgone conclusion, because in Baptism you already died and were raised with, and in Christ. As for your body, it will die and be placed in the ground to await the Resurrection, unless of course Christ returns first. Instead of worrying about these listen again to Jesus’ words; “Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.” (Luke 12:29-30)

Anxiety over earthly treasures is a sign of a lack of faith and trust in God. Anxiety over earthly treasures places those treasures above God and figures He can’t really help. Yes, you need food, shelter, clothing, some kind of currency, and God knows you need it and He faithfully provides all you NEED.

“Instead” of chasing worldly goods and treasures “, seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”(12:31) Jesus focuses His attention in these verses to have us look at our attitude towards earthly treasures against our attitude towards God and His eternal treasure, which is Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Jesus’ question here to His disciples, and by extension you and I, is regarding our attitude: is what you seek food and clothing or the kingdom of God? Jesus clearly directs us by His words “seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”(12:31)

Jesus continues with, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”(Luke 12:32-34)

I don’t know about you, but I personally wish Jesus had ordered the last verse the other way around. I would have greatly preferred Him to say ‘where your heart is, there your treasure is also’ because it would allow me to nullify some of my sinful anxiety over things by saying my heart directs what my treasure is as opposed to how Jesus says it, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” The reality is our hearts follow our treasures, not the other way around.

But, what is this heavenly treasure Jesus proclaims when He concludes “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”? This treasure is Christ Himself given for you and your sins. “This heavenly treasure is Christ, and the heavenly treasures are Christ’s gifts that bring *you* into and keep *you* in Christ’s kingdom”; namely God’s Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. “To be rich towards God, then, is to be a recipient of Christ and His gifts, a member of His kingdom through *His Word*, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.” (Just, 512)

God has richly blessed, and continues to bless each and every one of us with everything we need. He blesses us with food, clothing, shelter, family, life, and so much more. He doesn't promise us everything we want; rather He promises everything we need. He gives us much more than we could ever deserve. We have been anxious about all kinds of earthly things which have no eternal value. We have not trusted in God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things all the time. We have sinned, continue to sin, and are gravely guilty of sin. We've taken our eyes off the cross and the empty tomb and we fail to read, study, and hear God's Word as much as know we should, mainly since we claim Christ to be our greatest possession.

Yet, despite our unfaithfulness God is faithful. Despite our anxiety God is patient. Despite our chasing other treasures, God is still here with us. While our sins rightly accuse and condemn us, God sent His Son and took our guilt, punishment, and death. Instead of eternal death, by grace through faith on account of Christ, God instead gave you His greatest treasure.

In Jesus—because of His life, death, resurrection and ascension for you and all people—you have eternal life in Him. He lived for you. He carried all your sins to the cross and there He died for you. On the third day He rose for you. He ascended for you. He came and found you a filthy, lost, and condemned person, washed you with water and His Word in Baptism, and made you His own precious treasure. He gave you His own name in Baptism and made you part of His family: a full member of the Holy Christian Church and of the Communion of Saints. Christ, the greatest treasure, made you His treasure. As such, He continues to pour out His treasures on you. In Baptism He gave you the Holy Spirit Who guides you by God's Word of Law to repentance and also proclaims God's Word of Gospel that all your sins forgiven in, and solely because of Christ's completed work of salvation. God also invites you to the precious foretaste of the eternal feast in heaven in the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His Supper: the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of all your sins. “All this He does out of His pure, Fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on *your* part.”(SC, Apostles' Creed, 1st Article)

So, what is your greatest treasure? You have received, and continue to receive Christ Jesus Himself and all His treasures, now and for eternity. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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